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AUTHOR	Lumsden, Linda S.
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ABSTRACT

Following a brief introduction, five reports, books, and articles that examine the issues of engendering, maintaining, or regaining student motivation are summarized. While some offer specific strategies that can be used at the classroom level, others address issues beyond the classroom, recognizing that schoolwide policies and practices can also stimulate or fill students' hunger for learning. James P. Raffini challenges educators to examine the "win/lose" mentality present in many schools. He offers suggestions for structural change and class strategies designed to boost student motivation. Noting that "the classroom is not an island" Martin L. Maehr and Carol Midgley focus on schoolwide policies, practices, and procedures that have an impact on student motivation. They suggest a process through which school leaders can begin to move the school away from an emphasis on relative ability and toward an emphasis on "learning, task mastery, and effort." Carole A. Ames focuses on how motivational concepts and processes can be applied to everyday problems and decisions facing teachers. Jere Brophy gives examples of four categories of motivational strategies teachers can use to stimulate interests in learning. They are: (1) maintain students' expectations of success; (2) supply extrinsic motivation; (3) capitalize on existing intrinsic motivation; and (4) stimulate student motivation to learn. Hermine H. Marshall examines the distinctly different motivational orientations of three fifth-grade teachers. (KDP)

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Student Motivation

Linda S. Lumsden

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Administrators and teachers yearn for schools filled with students eager to savor what is served on the academic menu. The reality, however, is that many students enter the public school system brimming with curiosity, creativity, and confidence, only to soon lose their appetites for learning.

Is it possible for students' school experience to be both challenging and palatable? Can schools avoid creating winners and losers? What conditions and strategies can get students' mental juices flowing and foster an interest in learning for its own sake?

Each of the five items reviewed here examines the issues of engendering, maintaining, or regaining student motivation. While some offer specific strategies that can be used at the classroom level, others address issues beyond the classroom, recognizing that schoolwide policies and practices can also stimulate or dull students' hunger for learning.

James P. Raffini challenges educators to examine the "win/lose" mentality present in many schools. He offers more than 100 suggestions for structural changes and classroom strategies designed to boost student motivation.

Noting that "the classroom is not an island," *Martin L. Maehr and Carol Midgley* focus on schoolwide policies, practices, and procedures that have an impact on student motivation. They suggest a process through which school leaders can begin to "move the school away from an emphasis on relative ability and toward an emphasis on task mastery and learning."

Carole A. Ames focuses on how motivational concepts and processes can be applied to everyday problems and decisions facing teachers, and cautions teachers against relying on "conventional wisdom" when attempting to enhance student motivation, since some motivational principles are counterintuitive.

After identifying four preconditions necessary for motivational strategies to succeed in the classroom, *Jere Brophy* gives examples of four categories of motivational strategies teachers can use to stimulate student interest in learning.

Hermine H. Marshall examines the distinctly different motivational orientations of three fifth-grade teachers. She reveals how teachers' attitudes and beliefs about learning, motivation, and student ability influence the way they function in the classroom.

Raffini, James P. Winners Without Losers: Structures and Strategies for Increasing Student Motivation to Learn. Needham Heights, Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon, 1993. 286 pages. $40.95.

Students often "reject school as a valued activity" because many of their fundamental psychologi-

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Linda S. Lumsden is associate editor and writer for the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management at the University of Oregon.

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cal and academic needs are not being met in the school setting, says Raffini. However, if teachers arrange "conditions that attract, invite, and stimulate interest, and that help students meet their psychological and academic needs within the classroom," they can profoundly influence students' academic motivation.

In addition to examining classroom practices and approaches that undermine student motivation to learn, he offers more than 100 suggestions for structural changes and motivational strategies designed to satisfy students' unmet needs and, in turn, raise their motivation to learn.

He addresses students' psychological needs, apathy, intrinsic motivation, and classroom personality in the first half of the book. Enhancing student self-esteem, autonomy, competence, group-relatedness, and involvement in and enjoyment of learning are featured in the second half.

Strategies offered in the chapter on promoting enjoyment of learning include:

1. Actively involve students in the learning process;
2. Relate content objectives to student experiences;
3. Assess students' interests, hobbies, and extracurricular activities;
4. Occasionally present information and argue positions contrary to student assumptions;
5. Support instruction with humor, personal experiences, incidental information, and anecdotes that represent the human characteristics of the content;
6. Use divergent questions and brainstorming activities;
7. Vary instructional activities while maintaining curricular focus and structure;
8. Support spontaneity when it reinforces student academic interest;
9. Make a conscious attempt to monitor vocal delivery, gestures, body movement, eye contact, and facial expression to evaluate the degree of enthusiasm conveyed in one's teaching;
10. Review and redefine instructional objectives to determine if teachers value them and are committed to them.

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management
University of Oregon, 1787 Agate St., Eugene, Oregon 97403.
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Maehr, Martin L., and Carol Midgley. **"Enhancing Student Motivation: A Schoolwide Approach."** *Educational Psychologist* 26: 3 & 4 (1991): 399-427.

Maehr and Midgley look at student motivation from a systemic, or schoolwide, perspective. In recent years, educators have gained better understanding of what motivates students at the classroom level, but Maehr and Midgley urge educators not to stop there.

The authors invite those leading reform and restructuring efforts to evaluate school-level policies, practices, and procedures in light of their contribution to an *ability-focused* or a *task-focused* school climate. Students with an *ability focus* have an overriding need to perform successfully, but they measure their performance by comparing it with that of their peers. They may prefer a relatively bland, unchallenging academic diet that assures them of performing well.

In contrast, students with a *task focus* are propelled primarily by a desire to gain "understanding, insight, or skill and to accomplish something that is challenging." They value learning "in and of itself." They also attribute mastery to effort. Whereas an ability-focused child might tell her mother "she had a great day because she got an A, did better than her best friend, or because she won the spelling bee," a task-focused child might report that "she had a great day because she finally mastered long division, read a wonderful story about India, or tried to solve a really difficult problem."

Maehr and Midgley have developed and are currently implementing a program designed to determine whether it is possible to change school-level policies and practices to emphasize "learning, task mastery, and effort."

Ames, Carole A. **"Motivation: What Teachers Need to Know."** *Teachers College Record* 91:3 (Spring 1990): 409-21.

Should teachers rely on "conventional wisdom" when confronting the challenge of motivating students? No, says Ames, because "counterintuitive" principles are sometimes called for.

For example, when children lack confidence in their ability to succeed, teachers may sense that a "heavy dose of success experience" is needed. However, "children who perceive themselves as lacking

in ability do not tend to take responsibility for success and underestimate their performance when they do well," says Ames. They need more than being told they can succeed; they need strategies for reaching short-term goals. If they begin to focus on the means to the end (strategies) instead of the end itself (the outcome), they will be more likely to "own" the outcome.

Another common belief is that it is helpful to acknowledge something positive about a child's work, even if what is praised is not central to the task (such as complimenting a child on his neat handwriting when the assignment was to write a book report). However, if children are praised for tasks that they perform easily, or receive positive comments about irrelevant or extraneous factors, they tend to discount the praise and interpret it as a sign that they lack ability.

Developmental considerations also should be taken into account. For example, younger children interpret praise differently than older children. Because young children "equate effort with ability," praising them for their effort may indeed increase their self-confidence. However, older children, who are more concerned about being perceived as able, view effort as a "double-edged sword." In their eyes, it may be better to fail as a result of not attempting a task than to put forth effort and fail. The former may be perceived as "failure with honor" because it does not reflect on their ability. To praise older children for their effort, then, can sometimes be counterproductive.

Although Ames does not advocate doing away with all extrinsic incentives, educators should understand that extrinsic rewards often have "multiple effects on children's motivation." When applying extrinsic rewards, it is critical for teachers to take into account individual differences in student interest, performance, and ability.

Teachers also often hear that giving students choice in their tasks and activities will promote a sense of personal control and interest in learning. While there is truth to this, if students' relative performance is stressed, they will probably shun challenging tasks and be hesitant to follow their interests because they will be preoccupied with how their performance will stack up against that of other students.

Finally, if students fail or perform poorly, teachers may believe the best response is to tell them to try harder. However, this implies there is always a direct relationship between investment of effort and outcome. If students already believe they are trying hard (and young children in particular tend to believe they always try hard), being told to try harder may lower their sense of efficacy.

Brophy, Jere. **On Motivating Students.** Occasional Paper No. 101. East Lansing, Michigan: Institute for Research on Teaching, Michigan State University, October 1986 (ED 276 724). 76 pages. *Available from Institute for Research on Teaching, Michigan State University, 252 Erickson Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.*

Several studies indicate that students are, at best, only "dimly aware" of the purposes of assignments they are given. Most teachers, even those who are effective in other respects, fail to provide students with information about the purpose of assignments. When introducing tasks, they "do not systematically say and do things likely to stimulate their students' motivation to learn academic content and skills," according to Brophy.

He gives examples of four types of motivational strategies teachers can use:

• *Maintain students' expectations of success.* Teachers can stress that learning takes time, and often involves confusion or mistakes, but persistence usually results in success; they can focus on mastery and progress rather than comparison with peers; and they can help students alter their perceptions about the causes of failure, from sources outside their control (such as bad luck) to insufficient effort, an element within their control.

• *Supply extrinsic motivation.* Teachers can try to link successful task performance with things the student values, such as good grades, rewards, and special privileges. Although Brophy believes extrinsic rewards have their place, he advises teachers not to become overly reliant on them. If students work only to obtain an extrinsic reward, they may seek to meet only the required minimum standards for performance.

• *Capitalize on existing intrinsic motivation.* Teachers should gear tasks to students' interests, incorporate novelty and variety in tasks, give students opportunities to respond and receive feedback, and include "fun features" in learning activities whenever possible.

• *Stimulate student motivation to learn.* Since students pick up on teachers' attitudes and beliefs, teachers can model interest in learning. Brophy notes that it is important to "treat your students as if they already are eager learners." Classroom activities should be framed as learning experiences rather than tests. Especially when presenting key concepts, it is important for teachers to be cognizant of timing, nonverbal expressions and gestures, cueing, and other nonverbal techniques.

Marshall, Hermine H. **"Motivational Strategies of Three Fifth-Grade Teachers."** *Elementary School Journal* 88:2 (November 1987): 135-50.

Marshall closely observed three experienced teachers who had distinctly different views of learning, motivation, and student ability. In this article she explores how teachers' attitudes and beliefs about students and learning influence their instructional decisions.

Among the three teachers—referred to as X, Y, and Z—teacher X was the only one with a strong orientation toward "motivation to learn" and who used motivational strategies as an integral part of her teaching. She "emphasized the challenge and enjoyment of learning," says Marshall. Unlike teachers Y and Z, who in most instances made no motivational statements when initiating a new task, teacher X framed more than two-thirds of her lesson introductions with positive motivational statements that challenged students to use their minds. Comments such as "Get your brain started...You're going to think," or "I want creativity...Maybe I can learn something from you," were representative of her introductory remarks.

Compared to the other two classrooms, the teacher in this *learning-oriented* classroom spent far less time having to redirect student attention because of off-task behavior. Teacher X encouraged students to take responsibility for learning and to engage in self-evaluation rather than to depend solely on her for evaluation.

In contrast, teacher Y "encouraged students to 'do work,'" but did not emphasize learning *per se*. In introducing her lessons, she either avoided motivational statements altogether (she might say, "Open your books to page 382"), or she would refer to some external reason for student engagement, such as "The test will be on Thursday." She emphasized external sources of motivation, such as rewards, recognition, and threats. In this classroom, characterized as *work-oriented*, student responsibility for learning and work completion was not fostered.

Worse still, teacher Z "inadvertently contributed to students' avoidance of learning." In this *work-avoidant* classroom, lessons tended to be presented "solely as teacher-imposed demands, such as 'I want you to do the following'—without other motivational cues," Marshall says. This teacher relied heavily on threats, criticism, recognition, and her authority to try to combat what she perceived as "laziness or other student (or parent) faults for which she was not to blame." She also often ignored off-task behavior. Neither the teacher nor the students clearly assumed responsibility for work completion and learning, so students "learned that they could get away with not finishing their work."

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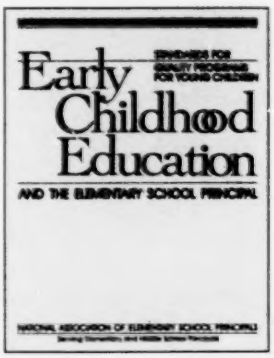

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